It Was Love (And it was killing him)
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It Was Love (And it was killing him)

by MilkyLatte_097

Summary

"Unrequited love," he whispered into the silence. The words tasted bitter on his tongue, and he couldn't suppress the hollow laugh that bubbled up in response. "Of course, it had to be love."

The realization had left him breathless—not just from the disease but from the sheer weight of it. Love? For Till? He thought back to the countless times he brushed off his emotions as admiration or deep friendship. Every lingering gaze, every unspoken wish to be closer, now burned with clarity.

It was love.

And it was killing him.

[He would die as he had lived—quietly, unremarkably, and without Till ever knowing how much he had meant to him.]

Ivan sat on the bathroom floor, his knees pulled tightly to his chest. The faint scent of flowers clung to the air—a cruel irony to the suffocating weight inside him. His trembling hand reached for the bundle of tissue on the sink. Each was stained with blood and delicate petals, proof of the invasive disease now blooming within him.

A sharp ache radiated through his chest, making him wince. He pressed a palm over his heart, futilely trying to ease the pain. It was as if the flowers were mocking him, growing stronger with every glance he stole at Till.

In the quiet moments of the night, Ivan's mind spun with relentless thoughts. He had searched up his symptoms—pain, petals, and the ceaseless longing—and the diagnosis had been clear. *Hanahaki Disease* .

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It was love.

And it was killing him.

His days were numbered.

The pain would only grow, the petals would continue to bloom, and the suffocation would intensify.

But it didn't matter. Ivan wasn't afraid of dying, not anymore. Not if it meant that the torment of his unrequited love for Till could end.

Ivan had always been Till's friend. Nothing more. Nothing less.

And that was the reality Ivan had accepted.

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Ivan's mornings started the same way. The sharp sting of the flowers fighting for space in his chest, the relentless cough that seemed to tear him apart. He had long stopped trying to hide it, at least from himself.

But when he faced Till, when he was with their friend group, it was a different story. He was still Ivan, the same Ivan who could make them laugh, who could joke around with ease and share a beer on a lazy weekend night. The smile never wavered, the words always coming out without hesitation.

He was, after all, a master at hiding what he felt.

Till never noticed. Or if he did, he never said anything. Ivan would never let him.

"Hey, you good?" Till asked one morning, a casual question, as he passed Ivan a sandwich. "You look a little pale."

Ivan grinned, swallowing the bitter taste of his own truth before responding. "Just a rough night," he said with a shrug. "Nothing to worry about."

"Alright," Till said, offering a smile that made Ivan's chest tighten. "Just take care of yourself."

"I will," Ivan assured him, though he didn't know how long he could keep up the facade.

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Days turned into weeks, and Ivan's condition worsened. But his routine never changed. He would wake up every morning, drink his sweetened coffee, and go about his day as if everything was fine. He would laugh at their jokes, share casual stories, and try his best to hold on to the image of the friend he had always been.

But at night, when the apartment was quiet and Till was fast asleep in the next room, that's when the real pain came. That's when the flowers bloomed more violently than before, when the ache in his chest became unbearable, and when he would stagger to the bathroom, coughing up the petals that had made their home inside him. It wasn't blood, but it might as well have been—each petal a piece of himself slipping away.

But no matter how bad it got, Ivan never let it show. Not in front of Till. Not in front of anyone.

He couldn’t afford to.

But, on this one particular night, Ivan struggles to stay in character. To keep a steady smile on his face. To look at Till in the eyes.

Ivan sat by the window, watching the stars flicker dimly against the dark sky. He hadn’t been able to eat much for days—the flowers in his lungs made every breath feel like he was choking, but the food wouldn’t go down. Till had noticed. He always noticed when Ivan didn’t eat, when he was too quiet or too distant. But he never asked anything more than the simple, "Are you okay?"

And Ivan always answered the same way. "I'm fine."

But Ivan wasn’t fine. He wasn’t sure he would ever be fine again.

His hand rested over his chest, feeling the soft, subtle ache that came from the flowers shifting inside him. Sometimes, he wondered if they were trying to tell him something, if his body was trying to scream out the truth that he’d buried so deeply in his heart.

But what good would it do?

Till would never feel the same way. He would never love Ivan the way Ivan loved him.

He had already accepted that. And, in some strange way, that made it easier. Because the truth was that Ivan didn’t want anything from Till. Not anymore. The weight of his feelings had become a part of him, a companion in the dark, something he carried with him every day.

And when he died, when his body gave in to the suffocating flowers, at least he would die knowing that he had loved him. That was enough.

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The last few days were the hardest. Ivan could feel himself slipping, could feel his energy draining away with every passing hour. The flowers had wrapped themselves tightly around his lungs now, leaving him gasping for air at times. But no matter how difficult it was, Ivan kept his composure. He refused to show any signs of weakness.

He couldn’t do that to Till.

So when Till came to him one evening, knocking on the door to ask if Ivan wanted to hang out with their group, Ivan smiled. He smiled even though his chest felt like it was being crushed by a thousand hands, even though his vision was blurry from the lack of oxygen, and even though he was so exhausted that his bones felt like they might shatter.

"I’m good," Ivan replied. "You go ahead. I think I’m gonna stay in tonight."

Till raised an eyebrow, his gaze lingering on Ivan for a moment too long. But Ivan just waved him off, forcing a light chuckle.

"I’m fine. Really. You go ahead."

"Alright…" Till hesitated, but then smiled and shrugged. "I'll bring you back something if you want. How about some sushi? Want some?"

Ivan nodded, watching as Till walked out the door. The moment the door clicked shut behind him, Ivan allowed himself to collapse on the couch, clutching his chest as the pain flared up once again. He could feel the flowers—soft and delicate, but deadly—wrapping themselves tighter with every breath.

He knew what was coming.

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Days passed, each one heavier than the last. Ivan could feel his body surrendering, each breath a little harder to draw, each step more exhausting than the one before. He had become accustomed to the petals—soft and cruel reminders of his unspoken love. They would arrive in the dead of night, tearing their way out of his chest as he muffled his cries into the pillow. He didn't want Till to hear. He couldn't let him know.

Ivan's mind often wandered during those sleepless nights, drifting through memories of laughter shared with Till. Those moments, so ordinary and fleeting, were everything to Ivan. He cherished them even as he knew they meant nothing more than friendship to Till.

"You're so hopeless," Till had once teased him, throwing a pillow at his face after he paid the delivery man that came knocking on their doorstep to deliver the package that he ordered while drunk. "What would you do without me?"

Ivan had laughed then, shrugging it off with a sheepish grin. But inside, the words cut deeper than Till could ever know. What *would* he do without Till? It was a question he no longer needed to answer. Soon, he wouldn't have to do anything at all.

He'd always known he wasn't remarkable. Not in the way Till was—the way he lit up a room just by being in it, the way people were drawn to him without even trying. Ivan, on the other hand, was just... there. A shadow in Till's orbit, a convenient roommate, a friend in the background.

And yet, despite it all, Till was kind to him, despite the snarky remarks, despite the playful punches on the elbow. He laughed at Ivan's jokes, brought home his favorite snacks, and even waited up for him on the nights Ivan worked late. Those little gestures were the only fuel Ivan had, and he clung to them with a desperation he could never admit. But deep down, he knew they weren't signs of something deeper. They were just Till being Till—thoughtful, generous, oblivious.

Ivan didn't blame him for not noticing. Why would he? Till deserved someone brighter, someone who could match his energy, someone who wasn't Ivan.

He thought about confessing once—just once. The idea had flickered in his mind late one night as he lay staring at the ceiling, his chest aching from the weight of the flowers. But before the thought could take root, Ivan had dismissed it. What would it accomplish? A confession wouldn't cure him. It wouldn't change the way Till looked at him. If anything, it would ruin the fragile, precious bond they had.

No, Ivan had decided. His love for Till would remain his alone, buried deep within him, just like the petals that would soon take his life.

The night Ivan finally succumbed to his faith, the apartment was silent. Till had gone out, leaving Ivan alone with his thoughts. He'd grown accustomed to the quiet, finding a strange comfort in it. It gave him space to think, to feel, to say goodbye in his own way.

The pain was unbearable now, a constant, gnawing presence in his chest. He couldn't move anymore. Even breathing felt like a battle he was destined to lose. He lay in his bed, staring at the dim light filtering through the curtains, the faint scent of flowers filling the room.

He thought of Till, as he always did. He thought of the way Till's laughter could brighten even the darkest days, the way he would flop onto the couch after a long day and complain about work, the way he always managed to make Ivan feel like he belonged—even if Ivan never truly believed it.

A tear slipped down his cheek, and then another. Ivan let them fall, unashamed. He wasn't afraid anymore.

He had loved Till with everything he had, even knowing it would destroy him. And though it hurt, though it had taken everything from him, he couldn't regret it. Loving Till had been the most beautiful, painful, and meaningful part of his life.

In his final moments, as his vision blurred and his breaths came shorter and faster, Ivan felt a fleeting regret—a longing for a life where things could have been different, where he could have been brave enough to tell Till the truth, where Till might have loved him back.

But that wasn't this life. And that was okay.

With a trembling hand, Ivan reached for the note he had written earlier, leaving it on the bedside table. It wasn't a confession, just a simple goodbye. He didn't want Till to feel guilty or burdened.

As his eyes fluttered shut, Ivan let out one last, shaky breath.

He would die as he had lived—quietly, unremarkably, and without Till ever knowing how much he had meant to him.

But it was enough.

Because he had loved him. And that love, no matter how painful, had made his life worth living.

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